

**Special Education
Program and Service Review
(Phase 11)
Final Report**

Prepared For
The
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

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APPENDICES

A - OCDSB Special Education Phase 1 Executive Summary.

B - OCDSB Special Education Review Advisory and Steering Committee.

C - OCDSB – Number of Students Identified by Exceptionality.

January 2006

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AND SERVICE REVIEW (Phase 11)

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (*OCDSB*) boundaries were formed in January 1998 as a result of provincial legislation. The amalgamation process resulted in the largest school board in Eastern Ontario, encompassing a geographic area of 2,760 square kilometers in and around the City of Ottawa, from Fitzroy Harbour in the west, Burritts Rapids in the south and Cumberland in the east.

The school board is now the seventh largest district by school population in the province of Ontario, serving 69,362 full-time equivalent (FTE) students (43,556 elementary and 25,806 secondary) and includes 149 school sites (119 elementary, 25 secondary, including the Adult High School and five secondary alternate sites). Its schools provide English with Core French, Early French Immersion, Middle French Immersion and Late French Immersion programs, which are delivered in single, dual and triple-track schools. As well, there are six alternative elementary programs located or co-located in the school board and two facilities that serve students aged 4 to 21 years with severe developmental disabilities: Clifford Bowey Public School and the Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education.

1.2 Board Philosophy

The Board's overall Mission Statement states that "*The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board challenges all students to achieve personal excellence in learning and responsible citizenship within a safe, equitable, diverse, and caring environment.*"

While there is no current broad statement of philosophy or direction for special education within the Board, the *OCDSB's* 2004-2005 Special Education Plan (page 3) does state that the service-delivery model of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board will offer students a full spectrum of placement options ranging from regular classes with special education resource support to special education classes and schools. Also, in consultation with the *OCDSB* Special Education Advisory Committee and input from the community, the *OCDSB* set out on page 4 of its plan, a number of expectations that may be regarded as guiding principles for the education of students with special education needs:

- a focus on the whole child;
- an emphasis on early identification and intervention;
- a continuum of services available for the students;
- partnership with parent(s)/guardian(s), teachers, professional staff, and the community supported by ongoing communication;

- support for teachers to develop the necessary skills and teaching strategies to work with students with special education needs; and
- full range of learning opportunities for each student with special education needs.

The *OCDSB* recognizes these essential components of special education to meet the needs of students and strives to achieve them through:

- a continuum or range of placement options;
- appropriate student/teacher ratios;
- multi-disciplinary professional support;
- integration opportunities within the community schools;
- timely assessments;
- current, outcome-oriented Individual Education Plans (*IEPs*);
- full understanding of the *IPRC* process, with consistent procedures;
- central tracking mechanism of all *IPRCs*; and
- transportation for students based upon Transportation Policy #P.068.TRA and student needs.

The Special Education Plan makes reference to the members who may be considered for the *In-school* and the *Multi-disciplinary* teams (page 6).

2.0 THE REVIEW PROCESS

2.1 Phase I

In 2004-2005, as part of a “*Review of Special Education Programs and Services*,” Clarke Research Consultants did the analysis of the survey questionnaire for the Special Education Review.¹ This questionnaire, designed to obtain feedback on the respondents’ satisfaction with various aspects of the present model of special education delivery, was sent to a sample of 4,000 selected staff and parents. Specifically, the survey dealt with demographic information, designated programs, professional development and home-school communications. In general, the respondents expressed satisfaction with many aspects of the current system; for example, 75% of the parents said that they understood the structure and use of Individual Educational Plans and parents and teachers felt that the work done by the special education support staff was helpful. The survey did raise some issues of concern, for example, the increased amounts of paper work involved in student identification and placement, the lack of special education qualifications among teachers and school leaders, and the number of students waiting for assessments. However, the small size of the sampling, the low response rate on the questionnaire (26%) and the general nature of the questions posed, meant that the process did not yield sufficient quantity or depth of information to form the basis for the type of long-range planning required in the system. The decision was made by both the Senior Administration and *SEAC* to recommend to the Board of Trustees that a second phase of the *Review of Special Education Programs and Services* be undertaken.

¹ An analysis of the findings from this special education survey was made public in March 2005. The executive summary is included in **Appendix A**.

2.2 Phase II

In September 2005, the steering committee determined the parameters and timelines for Phase II of the special education review, and to select an External Review Team (**Appendix B**). The mandate of the Review Team included the following:

- Review the Board's reports on the findings from the special education survey (February 2005 and March 2005 reports);
- Review the Board/Ad Hoc Committee's analysis of the financial expenditure information and current special education funding allocation;
- Review the Board's current special education program and service delivery model and staff deployment;
- Review the population of students being served;
- Identify possible improvements to programs and services;
- Comment upon the real or perceived validity of any gaps in services;
- Make specific recommendations that address present delivery mechanisms and possible future directions for special education service delivery; and
- Review any external factors to the school board (e.g., *CHEO*, demographics, social trends, etc.) that may impact on the delivery of special education in the Board.

2.3 Methodology

The Steering Committee outlined the following scope of work to be carried out by the Review Team prior to the on-site visitations:

- Review organizational and statistical data pertinent to the *OCDSB*'s special education programs and services;
- Review the current delivery model, internal documents (including human resource allocations), financial expenditures, special education plan and the procedural manuals or guidelines;
- Review the proposed impact of *MOE* funding grants and the effects of *ISA* portability;
- Review achievement data of students with special needs (e.g., *EQAO*, etc.); and
- Review any information deemed relevant to enhance the team's understanding of how programs and services are delivered within the *OCDSB*.

2.3.1 External Review Team Contacts

In October 2005, the External Reviewers met with the Advisory Steering Committee on two occasions. During the weeks of November 7th and 14th, the external team conducted on-site visits to 30 elementary and 10 secondary schools, representing a 27% sampling of school communities within the large geographic area of Ottawa-Carleton. As well, the team met for discussions with many groups representing a cross-section of the educational staff and trustees. Parents were invited to open meetings in different parts of the Board District. From these focus groups, the Review Team obtained feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the current special education programs and services and related issues. The groups included the following:

- Special Education Advisory Committee;
- Steering Committee for Special Education Review;

- School Board Trustees;
- Parent Evening Sessions (3) – West, Central and East areas;
- Employee Groups (2) – special education and regular teaching staff and educational assistants;
- Principals - elementary and secondary;
- Board central specialized professional staff;
- Director’s Senior Administrative Council;
- Union groups (*ETFO*, *OSSTF*, *OSSTF-EAs*, *OSSTF-PSSP*); and
- Several individual and small group interviews.

3.0 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The main body of this report will be concerned with specific aspects of special education delivery within the *OCDSB* and the degree to which present practices meet the needs of students, fulfill provincial expectations and compare favourably to those found in other school districts in Ontario. However, there are general observations that must be stated initially in order to provide a framework for the more specific comments that follow in Sections 4 and 5 and the final recommendations. Also, it must be recognized that, while the central focus of this report is *special education* programs and services, comments and recommendations made herein will, on occasion, make reference to other administrative areas, practices and policies within the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board because of the impact they have on the issues at hand.

3.1 Recent History

The *OCDSB* is a complex system with a long history of providing special education support to students through a range of specialized classrooms spread across the region, coupled with varying degrees of support within local schools. During the past decade, a number of provincially mandated changes have had an impact on all facets of education and have created new challenges in terms of administering larger, more diverse systems, meeting increased demands for accountability and dealing with the often competing expectations of employee groups, parents and members of the public at large with decreased financial resources. As is the case with many boards across Ontario, the Ottawa-Carleton school board has been, and to some extent still is, coping in a primarily reactive mode with issues arising from such things as amalgamation, new funding formulae and demographic changes.

Not least among the challenges created by the shifts that have occurred in recent years is the need to provide educational services to an increasing number of students who do not learn in traditional ways, who have significant disabilities or do not thrive in regular programs. While the number of students identified provincially through the *IPRC* process as being in need of additional support and/or specialized program placements has increased steadily over the last decade, there have been particularly dramatic increases in the number of students identified with Autism Spectrum Disorders, especially Asperger’s Syndrome². This increase is more pronounced in large urban centres and, while there are

² Asperger’s Syndrome is one of the five disorders identified under the category of Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) in the *Fourth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association (1994). Since this time, there has been an over 400 per cent increase in the number of children identified with this disorder.

differing explanations given for why these diagnoses are increasing and it is argued that those students now referred to under the Asperger's heading were previously found in other categories of exceptionality, the challenge of dealing with the new reality remains.

The Review Team is aware of the challenges that boards in Ontario have been facing in recent years and has taken these realities into account in reviewing the current practices in the OCDSB and in writing the comments that form the basis of this report.

3.2 A Framework of Special Education Delivery

There are six key components that form the framework of what is considered among professionals in the field and current literature to be exemplary special education practices:

- reliable and timely identification and placement processes;
- a full range of service options available to identified students;
- a high degree of equity in both placement and the provision of services;
- a strong core of qualified special education staff and a focus on capacity-building in the regular classroom teachers;
- a high quality of program delivery and monitoring; and
- active networks of communication among parents, teachers, students and service providers in the school system and larger community.

The Review Team used the six key components above as its framework for assessing the strengths, gaps and weaknesses in the OCDSB special education services throughout the review process. There is no bias on the part of the reviewers towards the relative merits of 'inclusion' of students with special needs in the regular classroom, or towards the clustering of such students into specialized sites. The general consensus in Ontario is that there must be a range of services, beginning with but not limited to the support of students within their home school community. This belief was the key consideration in the assessment of board services and in writing the report.

3.3 Ministry of Education Direction

In 2005, the Ministry of Education released an expert panel document on special education, *Education for All*. While it is clear that this document was put out for discussion and response, and that the technical guide setting out specific expectations is yet to be written, there is no doubt that the expert panel opinions are likely to inform government direction and funding strategies in the coming years. It is, therefore, the opinion of the Review Team that the philosophy of special education underpinning *Education for All* must be considered in any planning for change and renewal undertaken by the OCDSB in the coming months. To this end, references will be made to the Ministry document and the degree to which what has been observed within the OCDSB by the Review Team is, or is not, consistent with its implied directions.

3.4 Special Education within the OCDSB

The Review Team found that the OCDSB was unique among the boards reviewed thus far in the degree to which decisions about special education delivery have been shaped in recent years in a somewhat ad hoc way by parent lobby groups, SEAC and elected officials. In making this observation, the Review Team is not referring to decisions

about broad general directions or to desired levels of commitment to special education, but to such administrative particulars as school options, transportation, specialized class numbers and locations and staff assignments. This has had a great impact on the present structure and attendant challenges of special education services in the Board. Possibly linked to this is the absence of a clearly set-out and integrated system plan to deliver the high quality of education to *all* students referred to in the Board's Mission Statement (1.2). The absence of an overall plan, including a set of goals and directions linked to the guiding principles, and any outcome indicators, has meant that special education has evolved in what appears to be a patchy and uncoordinated way. This has been further exacerbated over the last few years by a lack of consistent leadership in special education due to a series of senior staff changes. These political and administrative realities will be discussed more fully in Sections 4 and 5 of this report.

On the matter of the status of the special education department within the overall operational structure of the organization, the *OCDSB* is much like other larger boards in the extent to which the department tends to be relatively isolated from the functioning of other departments. This phenomenon has been referred to as a 'silo' within the organization. It can be seen at every level, including the documents produced by the Board, the professional development of staff and the planning of new school buildings. For example, special education staff members have not been included in the board's literacy training sessions and the curriculum documents produced for the regular classrooms do not include samples of modifications or adaptations. While the Ottawa-Carleton Board is not unusual in this respect, and the Ministry itself has not integrated its own initiatives well, the lack of integration of the work of the Board departments belies the stated ideals of 'professional learning communities' and 'universal design' found in *Education for All*.

3.5 Best Practice References

The Review Team was impressed throughout the visitation weeks by the expertise and deep knowledge of many staff members at every level in the *OCDSB*. It was clear that there are school leaders, central support staff and individual teachers working extremely hard to meet the demands of their roles and to provide the best service to students and their families, often under difficult circumstances. There were examples of high quality work and practices that support the stated guiding principles in various parts of the system. These will be referred to specifically as the areas and issues of concern are discussed in Section 4. Frequently, particular schools and practices or programs will be named. However, it must be recognized that, during the two weeks of visitations, the Review Team was able to visit only 27% of the Board's schools. This is a significant sampling for the purposes of this report, but it does mean that other examples of good practice may have been missed. This must be taken into account as these references are made; the listings are by no means exhaustive. Similarly, it must be noted that comments about gaps or weaknesses in the system are based on what was heard, read and seen during the review time. The Reviewers acknowledge that they may not reflect conditions in some of the schools and classrooms that were not visited.

4.0 AREAS AND ISSUES OF CONCERN

4.1 Identification and Placement

The importance of prompt and reliable identification of students who will require additional support and/or special programs is widely accepted. It is the first pillar in the special education delivery structure. Many issues of concern were raised under this heading: early identification, the types of assessments used and their availability, the promptness of support and/or placement given, the rate of identification in the various categories and the appropriateness and location of the programs provided.

4.1.1 Early Identification (Entry-to-School Plan)

Entry to school marks an important transition into the formal education system at a critical age in a child's development. For children with special needs, this entry is more complex and requires special coordination and planning by parents, community service partners and school boards.

Parents of newly identified or diagnosed children expressed concerns with the lack of clear information about the service options offered by the Board and the lack of school entry protocols. Upon registration at the local schools, parents admitted that many of their concerns were addressed; however, they expressed the need to have early access to information on the educational options and the support available at the school and Board level. Presently, the OCDSB's Special Education Plan does not include an entry-to-school protocol or plan. The recent Ministry of Education resource guide (2005), "*Planning Entry to School*," provides a good resource for identifying effective practices.

4.1.2 School Teams

At the school level, the In-School Collaborative Team can play a critical, front-line support role for the classroom teachers and parents. However, the review process revealed inconsistencies across the system in terms of the composition and function of the team from school to school. In some schools, the team met weekly, in others, rarely. If these teams are going to effectively support the special education processes, they must meet regularly and the principals and/or vice-principals must be active participants on them. In the secondary schools, the Student Services Department Head should participate as an active member of the team. In addition, each meeting of these teams should have a structured agenda; minutes should be kept and follow-up strategies identified.

Examples of In-School Collaborative Teams functioning well were seen during the observation period of the review. In several schools, the importance of this team was evident in tracking, monitoring and addressing the special programming needs of students. At Fielding, Blossom Park, Stephen Leacock and Lisgar High School, the In-School Collaborative Teams demonstrated an integrated approach to meeting the special needs of students. In these schools, administrators, special education resource teachers and classroom teachers (as required) meet each week to track and monitor students, attempting to strengthen the communication within the school staff and to parents. At Ridgemont Secondary School, the 'vertical team' members work to support students in an integrated way, but in addition, they function as a learning community in order to increase their own professional knowledge of best practice. The comment made at

Ridgemont, “*No student should fall between the cracks,*” captures the attitude found in those schools where a team approach is taken to meeting student needs.

The In-School Team, and the Multi-disciplinary Team that interfaces with it, play a key *coordinating* role in the provision of services to children and youth. Some staff members expressed frustration that, when such teams are not meeting regularly and coordinating services, many people may be involved in supporting the same child with little understanding of what role each is playing and little sharing of information.

4.1.3 Assessment

A variety of assessment strategies may be used to determine the type and degree of a child’s exceptionality, from observations by a trained professional to a specific type of test or battery of tests. Two main concerns about assessment were raised frequently during the review: the availability of assessments and the appropriateness of the tests used. On the matter of *availability*, the Reviewers were told that the waiting list for requested assessments presently has over 4,000 names on it. Apparently, efforts have been made over the last few years to reduce this waiting list and, although contracted psychometrists make inroads, it does not take long for the numbers to increase again. Some parents have spent large amounts of money to get assessments done privately and, while this is understandable under the circumstances, it does compromise the principle of equity.³

In the written submissions and in public meetings, parents questioned the appropriateness of the assessment strategies currently used in the Board. There were suggestions that the *OCDSB* does not use the most sophisticated diagnostic instruments available on the market; the use of *C-CAT* screening for Giftedness was given as a case in point.⁴ The Review Team found that the many assessment tools presently used within the Board, coupled with the input of the professional staff, are of a quality found in other boards and certainly meet the standards set in the field. However, according to parents and staff, there does seem to be a wide difference across the Board in the quality of the *reports* written as the result of the assessment process. The Review Team saw too few examples to make a general statement on this issue, but of the reports that were seen, those generated within the Board tended to be neither as comprehensive nor detailed as those done privately, even when the assessors were the same individuals.

In terms of the *C-CAT* specifically, the Review Team was not concerned. It is widely used across the province as a first screening for giftedness, followed up by individual assessments for students who are initially identified. The concern for the Review Team about this test has less to do with its use per sé and more to do with how it is administered. Variations appear to exist from school to school in how this screening tool is presented and used. Anecdotal information was received from a number of quarters suggesting that protocols for *C-CAT* are not being followed in some schools; that the test was treated casually; children were asked whether they wanted to do it; parents were not informed about its use, etc. This should be checked into. Poor administration of any assessment tool compromises its results.

³ Approximately 50% of the assessments that have resulted in elementary Gifted placements were done privately.

⁴ The Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test or *C-CAT* (Nelson 1982) is a standardized, norm-referenced group test designed to measure cognitive abilities in verbal, quantitative and non-verbal areas. It is well regarded in the field because of its high ratings of validity and reliability.

4.1.4 Timing of Support and/or Placements

Once students have been identified and the needs statements written, there is an expectation on the part of parents that action will be taken quite quickly to provide service to their children. During the consultation process, three particular concerns about placement were raised. Firstly, a number of parents expressed concern that it took too long for special education supports to be put into place, whether this involved teacher or EA support, special equipment or a placement in a specialized class. Secondly, parents spoke of a lack of timely information on their children’s placements for the upcoming school year. Although it is board practice is to inform parents by mid-May, in many cases it was stated by parents that confirmations of alternate student placements were not received until mid-June, allowing no transition planning back to regular classes or to a specialized program for September. Thirdly, school personnel raised concerns that, when students who had been assessed and identified for placement moved away from the system for a short time, they lost their place in the queue for a specialized placement. Upon their return, the process of building up a case for getting services for them had to begin again. This is particularly problematic in beacon schools with high transience rates.

4.1.5 Identification Rates

Across the province, boards of similar sizes and types generally have similar patterns of identification in special education. The idea that parental lobbying, rather than the needs of *all* students in the system, shaped the delivery of special education in the OCDSB, was raised repeatedly. There appeared to be a widespread belief that individual parents and groups seeking services for Gifted and Asperger’s Syndrome students were particularly influential on Board decisions. In order to see if any credence could be given to this idea, the Review Team looked at two boards comparable to Ottawa-Carleton in size, type and range of delivery strategies. The boards are: Thames Valley DSB and Waterloo DSB. It should be noted also that these board districts include a number of facilities that attract families of children with special needs.

Below is the percentage of students identified by category within these boards, within the OCDSB and within the province as a whole (elementary and secondary).

**Figure 1 – Exceptional Student Population Identification
Elementary**

Exceptionality	Provincial Average	Thames Valley DSB	Waterloo DSB	Ottawa-Carleton DSB
Learning Disabled	47.2%	34.0%	26.0%	45.4 %
Mild Intellectual	8.3%	11.0%	7.7%	6.9 %
Giftedness	12.6%	15.6%	9.6%	20.6 %
Language Impaired	6.1%	1.4%	12.9%	5.1%
Behaviour	10.9%	7.8%	7.6%	8.0 %
Developmental Disability	8.3%	16.4%	2.8%	4.8 %
Autism	2.2%	6.0%	5.6%	5.6 %
Multiple Exceptionalities	3.2%	4.0%	23.7%	0.5 %
Physical Disability	1.8%	1.6%	2.1%	2.0 %
Blind & Low Vision	0.4%	0.1%	.8%	0.6 %
Deaf & Hard of Hearing	1.3%	0.4%	1.2%	1.4 %

**Figure 2 – Exceptional Student Population Identification
Secondary**

Exceptionality	Provincial Average	Thames Valley DSB	Waterloo DSB	Ottawa-Carleton DSB
Learning Disabled	54.2%	46.5%	32.5%	50.6 %
Mild Intellectual	8.8%	15.4%	8.6%	0.9 %
Giftedness	18.7%	12.0%	9.4%	32.6 %
Language Impaired	3.2%	2.0%	3.6%	1.7 %
Behaviour	5.1%	7.0%	7.8%	7.2 %
Developmental Disability	2.7%	12.9%	2.8%	2.1 %
Autism	0.8%	2.0%	5.4%	1.9 %
Multiple Exceptionalities	2.9%	1.2%	20.7%	0.8 %
Physical Disability	0.8%	0.7%	2.4%	0.9 %
Blind & Low Vision	0.5%	0.1%	.7%	0.4 %
Deaf & Hard of Hearing	1.1%	0.4%	1.2%	0.9 %

While the data from the selected boards is limited, it does appear that the *OCDSB* identifies significantly more students as ‘Gifted’ than would be expected. Whether this can be accounted for by the degree to which private assessments are done in the area, the more generous cut-off on the testing, the amount of parent lobbying or some other factors, is not clear. The argument that the Board attracts many gifted students from the co-terminus board and from the private system was not supported when the data were examined more closely. Also, it must be noted that the boards chosen for comparison also exist in areas in which Gifted congregated programs are not provided by their co-terminus boards.

4.1.6 Appropriateness and Location of Programs

Two other issues concerning placement that arose frequently during the Review are the *accuracy* of the specialized class designations and the *geographic* locations of the specialized classes. The matter of class designations is tied to the identification criteria used for the various exceptionalities. The *OCDSB* does have guidelines in place, ostensibly to ensure that children who meet the criteria for placement in, for example, a Language Impaired (Language Learning Disability) specialized class, are in such a class with children who meet the same criteria. The rationale for the practice of congregating students of the same designation together is to facilitate appropriate programming and to provide specific kinds of supports and/or opportunities. It is quite usual to find a range of students profiles, even within a designated group; however, the Review Team found that a number of specialized classes included students who seemed to be inappropriately placed and did not meet the expected criteria. The Primary Assessment classes, for example, have little movement in them and seem to have become multi-exceptional groupings. In discussion with school staff, it appears that students are sometimes placed outside their exceptionality because there are no spaces for them in more appropriate settings. Sometimes, it is because the student has multiple exceptionalities and the team has chosen to focus on one of these. The fact that *ESL* students are caught up in this issue further complicates the problem. Whatever the reason, it is necessary to look at the designations and make-up the classes carefully. It is particularly important that children

who could benefit from access to the curriculum not be placed in classrooms that cater to children whose disabilities do not allow them to do this to any significant extent.

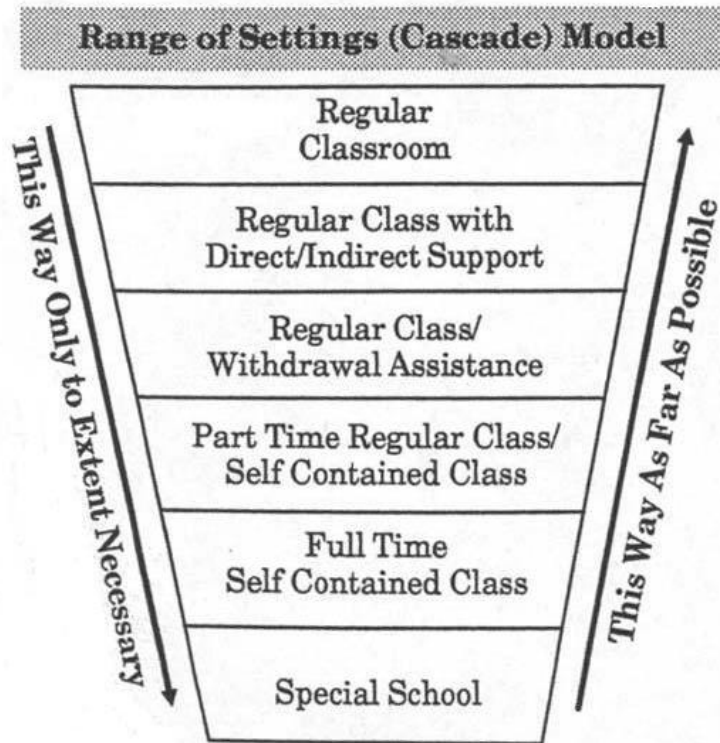
The issue of the geographic location of many specialized classes was also problematic for the Review Team. It seems unreasonable to have many very young children spending large amounts of time (well in excess of an hour) on school buses in order to reach specialized placements, particularly when classes with the same designation exist closer to their homes. Also, the practice of triple bus runs, however fiscally prudent, creates elementary school days that begin before 8:00 a.m. When schools start an hour earlier than normal and children are travelling long distances to access services, the effect is to make life more difficult for families and to compromise what is known to be best practice. It was clear that some special education classes were placed in small schools to shore up the numbers; some were placed or maintained at certain sites because of parental pressure and others are situated where they are because of past practice. Whatever the reasons, the result is that hundreds of *OCDSB* students cross the city every day and receive their programs away from their own neighbourhoods. They miss out on the opportunities to build local friendship networks, engage in extra-curricular activities and integrate their immediate community facilities into their learning.

4.2 Range of Service Options

Essential to dealing with student needs, whether emotional, physical or intellectual, is the recognition that each individual is unique, and that a range of options must be provided in an attempt to address both the needs and the uniqueness of the individual. Over the years, parents in Ontario have worked to break down the stereotyping and uniformity of treatment that accompanies the labelling of children according to categories: Developmentally Delayed, Autistic, Learning Disabled, etc. They have asked that their children be included in the lives of their community school and, in so far as it is possible and in the best interests of the children, that they be given access to the curriculum, to extra-curricular activities and to opportunities to work and play with their neighbourhood peers. It is now accepted best practice that, unless there are compelling reasons against it, the first placement of exceptional children is within their home school, with a range of supports available to enhance their opportunities for success.

The standard of special education practice has long been based on a placement model referred to as the 'Cascade Model' (**Figure 3**). Underlying this model are the principles that identified students always be placed in the most *enabling environment*, and that no restricted placement ever be regarded as *permanent*, unless there are special circumstances to support it. The range of placement options includes five levels beyond the regular classroom, with the largest numbers of students found in Levels 1 and 2 (inclusion in the regular classroom with varying levels of support), and the fewest at Level 5 (a special facility setting). Within the *OCDSB*, it is expected that Level 1 support (regular classroom) is provided by the *LST* and Level 2 (withdrawal assistance) by the *SELC*. However, in practice, the Review Team found that the majority of *LSTs* did little in-class support, particularly in the fall term when they spent the majority of their time on paperwork. Also, the quality and amount of *SELC* support varied greatly from school to school, amounting in some situations to a negative effect because the identified student was not only getting weak support in a withdrawn group, but was missing important regular classroom work due to a lack of coordination of instructional objectives between the *SELC* and the classroom teacher. Again, the parent perceptions that a real continuum of services does not exist across the Board appears to be accurate.

Figure 3 – The Cascade Model



4.2.1 Differentiated Instruction

In the last fifty years, the recognition that all individuals receive, process and express knowledge in their own unique ways, and that classrooms must include a wide variety of instructional strategies in order to maximize opportunities for success, has permeated educational writings and dialogue. The first step towards meeting the needs of all learners identified as exceptional or not is to build the capacity of teachers to differentiate instruction. The Review Team found that this concept was not widely understood across the Board. Indeed, the more commonly seen attitude was that all students who did not ‘fit in’ and learn in the traditional Socratic way and/or had gaps in their learning, should be withdrawn from the regular classroom and ‘fixed’ by someone else. Unfortunately, it was also noted that the instruction given to children within the withdrawn (*SEL*C) groups was primarily a watered-down repetition of what was done in the classroom. Many parents of exceptional students seemed aware of this situation and spoke or wrote about the pressure they put on the school system to get a child into a specialized class because there was ‘nothing’ for them elsewhere. A number of parents described the moment when a system placement was found for their child as like ‘winning the lottery.’

The differentiation of instruction can take many forms. The Review Team noted that, while far more work needs to be done in the regular secondary and elementary classrooms, excellent examples of differentiated instruction exist in pockets across the

system. For example, the skill-based Mathematics program put into place at Maple Ridge Elementary School is the result of teachers working together to meet the needs of a wide range of learners. This program involves flexible groupings, clear instructional targets and more focused teaching strategies. The gender-based options for Literacy and Mathematics implemented at Stephen Leacock School in grades 7 and 8 is another example of changing the variables that impact on student learning. The teacher is able to offer different instructions and resources to increase the success of boys in literacy learning and girls in numeracy. At Carleton Heights, the Special Support Unit (SSU) program provides a strong focus on literacy, social skills and participation in regular school activities. The program includes the regular grade level curriculum and a well-defined content on conflict resolution, social skills and anger management.

When new teaching strategies are tried, it is important to set clear instructional targets and to monitor student progress carefully. In each of the examples given, teachers are taking an 'action research' approach, working together in a coordinated way and monitoring progress to ensure that they are better meeting the differing learning needs of students.

4.2.2 Board Student Placement Options

The OCDSB documents state that the special education delivery model within the Board is based on the provision of a *full spectrum* of placement options, including differentiated instruction in the regular classroom, direct support from resource staff, partial integration and placement in self-contained specialized classrooms.

The charts below (**Figures 4 and 5**) indicate the number of elementary and secondary student placements by area of exceptionality in the OCDSB⁵. In looking at whether or not a true spectrum of services exists, the pattern of placement across all the exceptionalities must be considered.

⁵ In cases where a student has been identified with more than one exceptionality, the data indicate only the dominant exceptionality for that pupil. Also, it must be noted that a difference exists between placement of students by areas of exceptionality and the number of identified students by exceptionality (Appendix C). This can be partially explained by the fact school boards must report to the Ministry data only on the *dominant* exceptionality, in cases where students have more than one. The OCDSB data gathered indicate that 13 % of elementary and 31% of secondary students have more than one exceptionality.

Figure 4

**Placements of OCDSB Students by Areas of Exceptionality
(Elementary)**

Area of Exceptionality	Reg. Class with Indirect Support	Reg. Class with Resource Assistance	Reg. Class with Withdrawal Assistance	Partially Integrated Support	Self-Contained Support
Behaviour	15%	19%	35%	7.0%	23%
Autistic	16%	19%	26%	2.0%	36%
Deaf & Hard of Hearing	39%	4.0%	44%	11%	3.0%
Learning Disability	7.0%	18.6%	69%	3%	1.9%
Language Impairment	8.0%	12.4%	46%	9.6%	24%
Giftedness	13.6%	9.7%	14%	1.5%	61%
Mild Intellectual Disability	0.8%	1.7%	27%	2.9%	67.6%
Developmental Disability	1.8%	0.7%	2.6%	10.9%	84%
Blind and Low Vision	65%	5.0%	25%	0%	5.0%
Physical Disability	20%	16%	27.5%	4.0%	32.5%
Multiple Exceptionality	4.5%	0%	23%	4.5%	68%

In the Cascade Model described earlier, the pattern of placement that reflects its underlying principles has the *majority* of exceptional students being served within their home school community and the *minority* being placed in self-contained classrooms.

It is clear from Figure 4 above, that the Board’s elementary placement data do not reflect the Cascade model in a consistent way. It is seen, for example, under the category of ‘Behaviour’, in which the majority of identified students (69%) is included in the regular classrooms with increasing levels of support and a minority (23%) is placed in congregated classes. Likewise, the majority of students identified as ‘Learning Disabled’ (95%) is maintained in the regular classrooms, and a minority (1.9%) is placed in congregated classes. In contrast, a minority of students identified as ‘Gifted’ is given support within a regular program (37%), while the majority (61%) is placed in specialized classes. The pattern for the placement of students with a ‘Mild Intellectual’ designation, mainly accommodated in General Learning programs, is similar: 29% in a regular program and 67% in specialized classrooms. This latter information needs to be looked at more carefully. It is most unusual to have so many children with this designation out of the regular classroom. It suggests that the Board is not using the category designation in the usual way. The issue of correct designation by exceptionality of children and classes has been touched on in Section 4.1.5 of this report.

Figure 5
Placements of OCDSB Students by Areas of Exceptionality
(Secondary)

Area of Exceptionality	Reg. Class with Indirect Support	Reg. Class with Resource Assistance	Reg. Class with Withdrawal Assistance	Partially Integrated Support	Self-Contained Support
Behaviour	1.0%	22%	63%	8.0%	5.0%
Autistic	3.5%	13%	49%	1.0%	33%
Deaf & Hard of Hearing	26%	3%	59%	6.0%	6.0%
Learning Disability	2.6%	28%	66%	3.0%	0.1%
Language Impairment	1.5%	16%	80%	1.5%	.8%
Giftedness	14%	.5%	37.5%	47%	0.9%
Mild Intellectual Disability	0.8%	23%	31%	1.7%	43%
Developmental Disability	0	0	0.9%	0	99%
Blind and Low Vision	41%	16.4%	25%	8.0%	8.0%
Physical Disability	3.0%	26%	42%	0	29%
Multiple Exceptionality	0	16%	20%	9.0%	54.5%

As noted above, it is immediately apparent upon examination of the data supplied in Figures 4 and 5, that the expected pattern of placement described earlier under 4.2.1 is not occurring in all areas of exceptionality, particularly in the elementary panel. In fact, in the categories of Gifted and Mild Intellectual Disability (Elementary), a Level 4 intervention appears to be the *preferred choice* for the majority of students. In order to see whether this situation adds credence to the belief within the system that service delivery has been skewed in some way by outside pressures, the Review Team again looked at comparable boards. As well, the OCDSB data indicates that 13.4 % of students enrolled in September 2005 have been identified with one or more exceptionalities. The provincial date for all school boards is an approximate 8.8 % identification rate.

Figure 6 – Gifted Identification and Placement Elementary

Board	Total Elementary Pupils	% Identified as Gifted Elementary	Number supported in regular classes	Number in part-time or withdrawal programs	Number in (Congregated) Specialized Classes
Ottawa-Carleton DSB	43,556	20.6 %	23.1 %	15.6 %	61.3 %
Thames Valley DSB	57,690	15.6%	68.1%	10.2 %	21.8 %
Waterloo DSB	40,218	9.6%	62.4%	19.4%	18.2%
Provincial Averages (04-05)	---	12.6%	61.9 %	11.6 %	26.4 %

Figure 7 – Mild Intellectual Disability Identification and Placement Elementary

Board	Total Elementary Pupils	% Identified as Mild Intellectual Elementary	Number supported in regular classes	Number in part-time or withdrawal programs	Number in (Congregated) Specialized Classes
Ottawa-Carleton DSB	43,556	6.4 %	2.6%	29.7 %	67.7 %
Thames Valley DSB	57,690	11.5%	98%	2.0%	0
Waterloo DSB	40,218	7.7%	82.2%	5.2%	12.6%
Provincial Averages	—	8.3%	58.6%	22.8%	18.6%

Both the charts above give cause for further discussion within the *OCDSB*. First to be examined are the criteria being used to designate children as being gifted. Most boards couple testing with evidence of creativity and task commitment (Renzulli’s Enrichment Triad Model) or with evidence of excellence, rarity, productivity, demonstrability and value (Sternberg’s Pentagonal Implicit Theory). It should be noted that none of the boards named above identify children in the primary grades as Gifted, arguing that the developmental elasticity so typical at ages 4-9 can make confident identification difficult. The *OCDSB* has set up Primary Gifted Classes specifically for children designated as “Profoundly Gifted”. None of the boards questioned identify more than a handful of children in this category. Referred to in some of the literature as a “one in a million” category, this type of giftedness is usually quite eccentric, that is, marked in one of two areas only and often accompanied by

average performance in other areas. This may make *individual* programming, rather than congregated classes, more appropriate placement for these rare children.⁶

Questions should also be raised about the category of Mild Intellectual Disability, given the data above. It may be that the OCDSB is using this category for students with Asperger's Syndrome or students with multiple disabilities. It will be necessary to ensure that what most boards would describe as the 'typical MID' student is not being placed in specialized classes with more seriously disabled students and/or being given little access to the regular Ontario academic curriculum.

4.2.3 Program Flexibility

In order to ensure that exceptional students are in the 'most enabling' setting as they grow towards increasing levels of competence and independence, goals must be set for them, as well as regular reviews of their placements in relation to the attainment of these goals. This is particularly important in those instances where intensive intervention and/or highly specialized support should, if effective, lead the student to become more able to handle a regular program; for example, students with behavioural or expressive language difficulties. Unfortunately, because parents, seeing little support elsewhere, push hard to get their children into congregated classes, and because there are no exit procedures in place to provide support for students who could leave the congregated classes, there is little movement in the system. This further compounds the problem for those children with high needs on waiting lists for placement. It also causes great anxiety for parents whose children have been in congregated classes for a significant period of time, but have no such place at the next level of schooling. As noted, some children in the Primary Language classrooms have to cope with going from a Level 4 service to 'nothing' as they move into Grade 4. It is not that the Review Team advocates more specialized language classes at the Junior level: it does not. However, more flexibility or 'grey areas' should exist in a true range of options model.

4.2.4 Transitions

The transitions between regular classes and specialized classes, and from elementary school to secondary school, can be difficult for exceptional students. The Reviewers observed that students with severe needs are being served well in a number of secondary schools. As well, many feeder elementary school staffs shared successful strategies that had been put into place to facilitate the smooth transition of students with special education needs to the secondary level. However, the success of this type of transition depends very much on the individual family of schools initiative. There is no consistency of expectation across the system that this transitional stage will be well handled, that records will be shared in a timely way⁷, that supports will be in place at the beginning of the new school year or that the students will be oriented to the secondary school when they arrive. The additional funding from the Ministry in the past two years to identify and provide intervention initiatives for "at risk" pupils in grades 7 to 9 is making some impact on student success.

⁶ In one of the boards, for example, a Grade 3 child, identified as Profoundly Gifted, has completed all of the Ontario Math curriculum to Grade 12 and is now attending evening classes in Math at University. The child is in regular class for the school day. A Math Tutor is provided by the board.

⁷ The principals and school staff expressed frustration over not receiving student records (OSRs) in a timely manner from elementary schools. When the Review Team was in schools in November, some documents requested in June had not arrived. The complete student assessment data, therefore, was not available for completing the IEPs within the required timelines.

A second area of transition that receives little attention is that in which a student moves *out of* a specialized class placement and *back into* a regular program. Lack of support in this type of transition can have a profound impact on the student's opportunity for success. Parents of students moving out of the Primary Language Class after Grade 3, spoke of the frustration of having their children cope with moving from a small, protected, full-service situation to a regular class placement with *no support* at all. Students moving from a Behaviour program are particularly vulnerable when it comes to unsupported transitions.

A third area in which transitions are important is in the schools in which system specialized programs are located. The school *SELCS* often play an important role in the coordination, planning and support of the links with these programs. It was observed that the staff members at Metcalfe School, for example, have made a strong commitment to facilitating the transition of the students in the specialized classes into the whole life of the school and community. At Centennial School, the Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Program staff must be recognized for the extensive work they have done to ensure a high level of support for their students, in community liaison with parents, agencies, and the Ministry. The staff places a strong emphasis on individualized programming.

4.2.5 Specialized School Centres

The specialized school centres target the education of students with a special need or learning style. Clifford Bowey and Crystal Bay Centre have been specifically equipped and furnished to serve the needs of students from ages 5 to 21 whose primary exceptionality is an intellectual-development delay. The staff is structured into multi-disciplinary teams consisting of teacher (team leader), *EAs* and the required specialized support personnel. It was evident in both centres that students' needs and the nurturing of their potential were the prime focuses of the school and the related decision-making. Over the years, both centres indicated that staffing reductions have impacted on the delivery of programs and services. While the students entering the specialized programs have more complex and diverse medical and learning exceptionalities, supports for them have decreased. Information provided to the Reviewers indicated that recent Board policy increased the staffing ratio from 1:10 to 1:8 (teacher to students). Another ongoing challenge at both centres is to get qualified *supply* staff when there are teacher or *EA* absences. The task of finding appropriate replacements can take many hours of administrative time each day.

Sir Guy Carleton High School and the Ottawa Technical Learning Centre were originally operated as vocational schools in the western and eastern sections of the city. Over the years, both schools have evolved to serve the needs of a greater percentage of students identified with exceptionalities, requiring development of special programs to meet their needs. A large number of the General Learning Programs have been placed in these sites providing an opportunity to integrate the academic, life skill and vocational opportunities for these students. Many comments received from staff suggest that further clarity and direction is required on the future plans for these centres. The Review Team suggests that a new look must be taken at the secondary education choices in the Board with regard to those students who do not meet the "regular" secondary school's profile, but would greatly benefit from opportunities of obtaining practical trade skills in a vocational school setting. School staff and parents wanted to clarify whether these sites are considered *vocational* or *special education* centres. The Board's secondary school planning process will, no doubt, consider the function of the two vocational schools. Much is changing at the provincial level and discussions and consultations will be needed to determine the future direction and role of these *OCDSB* schools in the delivery of secondary programming to all students. The two existing Board Ad Hoc committees, Secondary School Program Committee and the Ad Hoc

Trades and Technology Committee, should include recommendations about these centres in their mandates.

4.2.6 Third Party Support

Parents and school staff raised concern over the Board's policy direction, implemented two years ago, which prevents outside professionals or paraprofessionals from working in schools to support students with special needs. This can be a contentious issue, from a liability and union standpoint and a committee within the Board is presently looking at it. The Reviewers feel that a protocol for *Third Party Support* should be developed, with the appropriate consultation, to clarify areas in the system where this support could be considered.

4.3 Equity

An equitable system of accessibility and availability to all service options, regardless of geography, socio-economic status and/or the nature of the identification, should be a cornerstone of special education in all publicly-funded boards. Indeed, the Board's own policy speaks to the right of all exceptional students to appropriate supports and "fair access to special programs."⁸ However, attaining equity is not easy. Given many competing interests and, as was the case with the amalgamation of the Ottawa and Carleton boards in 1998, with differing cultures and practices, it is easier to choose to treat all equally rather than equitably. The latter requires more time-consuming and difficult decisions about resource allocation.

4.3.1 Staff Allocation

Within the *OCDSB*, many decisions over the last few years have used simple numerical formulae to determine the placement of school-based support staff, such as *LSTs* and *SELCS*. The central support staff, such as psychologists and social workers, is also allocated in this way. Each formula is largely based on enrolment data projected for September. Although some adjustments are made to these allocations, and designations such as 'Beacon School' or 'near Beacon School' generate some special considerations, the Review Team found that the supports provided to the schools visited did not seem to fairly reflect their *actual* needs. To be more equitable, it is the *school profiles* that should generate resources and staff allocations. These profiles should be reviewed from year to year as circumstances change. Furthermore, there should be some flexibility in allocation of support staff at both the school and board levels in order to respond to changes that occur *during* the school year.

It is recognized that the collective agreements that the Board negotiates with the employee groups play a large part in determining the allocation and job descriptions of all staff. Many concerns were raised during the Review that the most recent *OCDSB* collective agreements have had a negative impact on the delivery of special education services; for example, the 6/8 periods for all teaching staff, including *LST/SERT*, the loss of home rooms at the secondary level and the decrease in student contact time. A full discussion about the impact of any draft agreements with all employee groups on the most vulnerable students should occur prior to ratification.

4.3.2 Identification Patterns

Fundamental to discussions about equity is the question of whether certain practices reflect a bias against any particular group. For example, a number of times during discussions and in written submissions, it was suggested that children in the lower socio-economic areas of the

⁸ Board Policy P096 SES (2000).

Board were not being identified for placement in classes for the Gifted. The pattern of identification across the region was discussed in Section 4.1.4. Given that giftedness is distributed across all socio-economic levels and is as likely to be found in children from recently arrived immigrant families as amongst those who were born in Canada, the uneven distribution of identification seen in the *OCDSB* does seem to support the suggestion that inequity exists⁹. However, the issue is more complex. In comparison to the majority of boards in Ontario, the *OCDSB* has created many levels of school programs, each of *differing status* in the eyes of the community. The three entry points of French Immersion Programs, the various Gifted Classes, the Baccalaureate Program, the alternative programs, and so on, fall on a continuum of perceived status in which the ‘regular English’ elementary school program holds bottom position. It is to this English program that students who are not successful in the other programs return, and it is in this program that the majority of students from lower socio-economic areas whose parents do not have the knowledge or language to navigate the system are found. The Review Team noted that the classes in the regular English programs within the city’s dual or triple track schools tended to have more students needing support, lower achievement levels and, in some cases, larger numbers than the immersion classes. Some parents were quite candid in admitting that they had put their children into immersion classes or had private assessments done in order to ensure that their children were not in the ‘ghetto’ classes.

It is clear that, in trying to provide a wide range of different programs, the *OCDSB* has become a system in which there is a clear hierarchy of schools and services. While it may be argued that this was necessary to compete with the private school system and the co-terminus board, and that some hierarchy exists in all boards, the *degree* to which schools and programs vary in *status* and *perceived quality* across the system, and the *degree* to which this impacts on the opportunities provided for the poorest families in the community, is an issue. It is the inequity of this, rather than the matter of gifted placements, that should be addressed in the coming years.

4.3.3 Specialized Class Locations

The selection of sites for specialized programs involves many considerations: proximity to the homes of the students coming to the classes, opportunities for integration, adequate physical facilities, and so on. However, in discussions with parents and staff, it would appear that other political and facility pressures are brought to bear on these decisions. Many of those who spoke on this issue argued that the rural areas of the Board are underserved and that the majority of congregated classes are in the ‘old Ottawa Board’. In the absence of an overall plan for such classes and a clear set of guidelines upon which to base site decisions, the Review Team could not determine whether the present locations were adequate or appropriate.

4.4 Staffing

4.4.1 Staff Qualifications

A strong, experienced and qualified staff is a great asset to the delivery of a high quality of special education. The data provided to the Review Team by the Human Resources staff indicated that 88% of the school-based Learning Support Teachers (*LSTs*) have specialist qualifications in special education. In comparison to other boards, this is a high figure and

⁹ Reports presented to the *SEAC* committee in recent months, use postal codes and socio-economic data to illustrate that children in poorer areas are under-represented in the numbers identified as Gifted. Also, the identification rate for Giftedness in one particular area of the Board is three times the average rate.

indicates that the Board has well qualified staff in this important school role. However, because of a lack of clear expectations for the role within the school, as well as the consistent support of curriculum expertise and central professional development, the potential effectiveness of the expertise is compromised. Much of the *LST* expertise now goes into paperwork rather than direct service to children. Also, many *LST* and *SELC* staff members with excellent credentials indicated a high level of discomfort at being asked to work directly with classroom teachers, either to build the capacity of the teachers to use differentiated instructional strategies or to support accommodations for students with special needs. Many said that teachers did not want them to take on an in-class role and/or that principals encouraged the withdrawal model. The realities described here mean that one of the Board's most precious assets, the knowledge base of its employees, is not being used effectively.

Supporting the delivery of special education within classrooms across the system, the *OCDSB* has a number of well-qualified Educational Assistants. The extent to which the work of these support staff members is valued, and the extent to which they are included in the school planning, teams and professional development, varies considerably from school to school. The expertise found in this employee group is an important resource within the Board and efforts should be made to recognize this in some consistent way across the system.

In the system specialized classes, the Review Team found two categories of staff: those with extensive years of teaching experience in self-contained classes and new teachers who generally lacked the depth of experience to do well in a specialized setting. The challenge of attracting exemplary classroom teachers with special education qualifications is a problem being faced by school boards across Ontario. Whatever the reason, greater efforts could be made to attract experienced teachers into these roles by decreasing the paper workload, providing systemic in-service and the assurance of the option for returning to a regular classroom assignment, and valuing this professional growth experience for system opportunities.

4.4.2 Staffing of System Specialized Programs

The Review Team did not find a clear system direction for the staffing and resourcing of system specialized programs (classes). The location and movement of these programs and the creation of new programs appear to be part of an extensive and complex central decision-making process, involving recommendation from central staff, consultation and input from *SEAC* and finally, Board approval. However, when the establishment of a specialized class at a particular site is eventually approved, it appears that the responsibility for the *staffing* of this system class is left to the individual school principal. The Review Team found minimum or no involvement or input from the superintendents or central special education consultants in the staffing of these system classes. Certainly, the constraints of the collective agreements may place restrictions and limits on the selection of the most experienced and qualified staff for this assignment; nevertheless, it must be recognized that staff assigned to such system programs should have current knowledge about all aspects of working with the various exceptionalities, strong curriculum backgrounds and superior skills in programming to meet the special needs of the pupils with identified exceptionalities. Leaving the selection and monitoring of teachers for these classes to school principals inevitably means that standards will be compromised in too many instances.

Coupled with the issue of staffing system classes is the issue of adequately funding them. School principals expressed concern over the lack of access to information on new students being admitted to the specialized programs and the resources needed to support them. The Review Team found a great deal of discretion allowed in how money was spent on resources

for the self-contained classrooms. With the lack of clear central programming expectations and guidelines on the resources needed for the specialized programs, each program site seems to have developed its own model. In other words, there is little or no consistency across the system from one class to another of the same designation. The Review Team saw examples of teachers working quite autonomously, “behind the classroom door,” using what could be best described as outdated teaching practices and uninformed professional judgment.

4.4.3 Capacity Building

Within the regular class programs, the reviewers found that the majority of teachers did not believe that it was their responsibility to program for exceptional children or work on the Individual Educational Plans of these children. This view was widespread across the system and echoed comments referred to earlier, that resource staff were there to take children who did not ‘fit’ into the regular classroom and help to ‘fix’ them.

The concept of Universal Design¹⁰ underpins a model of instruction that has arisen from a body of research done over the last thirty years. It posits that all students benefit in their academic growth from being exposed to a wide variety of teaching strategies. Within this model, the lines are blurred between ‘special’ education and ‘regular’ education. In fact its proponents would argue, and the Review Team would concur, that the distinctions are quite artificial in many respects. Every child has a range of strengths and weaknesses and, for every moderately exceptional student identified by the system, there are those with almost identical characteristics who have not been identified. As the Board seeks to increase the capacity of the teaching staff to address individual learning needs more successfully within the child’s home school, the Universal Design approach will be quite relevant.

4.5 Program Quality and Monitoring

This report has already made reference to concerns about quality, either directly or indirectly. The discussion here is specifically related to the quality of *programs and supports* provided to students once they have been identified, whether they are placed in specialized classes or maintained in regular classes.

4.5.1 Program Indicators

The Review Team has raised the issue of the lack of consistency and standards of service for special education students across the system. As noted above, it was very evident from classroom to classroom serving designated children, for example, ‘Autistic’ or ‘Gifted’ or ‘Behavioural’, that the teachers in those programs largely determined by themselves the instructional strategies, room organization, interventions and achievement goals for those students. In fact, the Review Team found that a number of the programs in place in the specialized classes, including Gifted, are not of a high quality, nor do they reflect current knowledge in the field. Some parents acknowledged this, saying that they wanted their children in Gifted placements more because of the opportunity these afforded the children to mix with other gifted children, rather than because the program offered was significantly better.

The same pattern of inconsistency and the use of self-selected programs was observed in the support given to special education students who were in regular classrooms. What is lacking is a comprehensive program outline that includes the rationale and program indicators,

¹⁰ This concept is discussed more fully in the Ministry’s discussion document on special education, *Education for All* (2005).

accompanied by adequate resources and clear lines of accountability, for each specialized class and each area of exceptionality dealt with in withdrawal groups or in the regular classrooms. It is in these guidelines that the overlap between special education and the regular curriculum should be in evidence. At present it is not. A true continuum of service ensures that children with special needs have access to the *regular* curriculum. This ensures that partial or full re-integration always remains a possibility for them. Without this, special class placement becomes what one teacher referred to as “a life sentence.”

It is worth noting here that some parents raised concerns that the Ontario literacy and numeracy expectations were not being taught in all of the Gifted classes. There may be some credence to this opinion in that the Review Team noted, for example, that the *EQAO* reading scores in a number of schools that have specialized Gifted Classes in their buildings, did not reflect the percentage of students reaching Level 4 that would be expected.

4.5.2 Monitoring and Supervision

Central to the assurance that a high quality of education and service is being maintained within any organization is the existence of clear lines of reporting and monitoring. The Review Team could not determine any transparent or consistent lines of supervision and accountability within the delivery of special education across the system, region or school levels. The present *OCDSB* model, in which the site-based principals are responsible for monitoring both specialized classes and the withdrawal support *in the absence of program indicators*, may be at the root of the inconsistencies and lack of quality seen in many areas by the reviewers. Much needs to be done to ensure that principals understand the “look fors” in special education when they discuss programming with teachers, particularly *LSTs* and *SELCs*. Also, the ability of regular classroom teachers to successfully implement the modifications and accommodations called for in the *IEP* statements, should become a key part of appraisal for both elementary and secondary classroom teachers. Within specialized system classes, the problem of quality assurance may be further compounded by the lack of direct involvement of the central teams of specialists in the selection of teachers for specialized classes and the follow-up monitoring needed to ensure that guidelines are being followed and that standards are being met.

4.5.3 Technology Support

The Review Team did not sense that there is a close working relation between Curriculum, Business & Learning Technology and Staff Development within the *OCDSB*. If this impression is correct, it would account for the lack of a learning technology plan to support students with special needs in regular classrooms or specialized programs. It would also account for the absence of current technology in some areas and the gaps in assistive technology training for staff. Assistive technology is any technology that allows a student to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capacities of an individual with special learning needs. Its applications and adaptations can help open doors to previously inaccessible learning opportunities for many children with special needs. Depending on the individual student, computer-based technology can specifically address reading, writing and numeracy with the many capabilities, including word processing, spell-checking, organizational strategies, publishing tools and self-read, as well as unique integrative experiences, such as multimedia functions.

In order to use assistive technology, and all other aids and equipment purchased to support special education programming, teachers must know what is available and where it is located. During the Review, there were suggestions that expensive equipment is sitting in cupboards unused while students in other schools, who need such equipment, do not have it.

Maintaining up-to-date, accurate school and system inventories of equipment and learning aids purchased with special education funding is important. Making such an inventory available across the system will enable teachers to know what is available and to more easily obtain what their students need.¹¹

4.5.4 Secondary Services

From parent input, focus groups and on-site discussions, concerns were raised about the passage of students with special needs from elementary to secondary schools and, once in high school, about the range of learning options available to them and the degree to which they were supported in the classroom. In general, the following program offerings are available in most secondary schools (excluding the system specialized programs): Learning Strategies (credit) courses in Grades 9 and 10; locally developed (Essentials) Math, English and Science; independent learning courses (*ILCs*) offered in the *LST/Resource Centre*; non-credit *LST/Resource Centre* assistance scheduled on student timetable; “as needed” non-credit *LST/Resource Centre* access; and in-class support from *EAs* and *LST* for credit courses.

4.5.5 Data Gathering

While steps are being taken to improve the Board’s special education data-gathering capacity, the availability of *accurate* and *current* system/school information is still a problem. The previous *Special Education Tracking System (SPTS)* used a customized Oracle-based system, which was linked to the *OCDSB* student database. The *SPTS* was both a file management system and *IPRC* information database. It enabled central/school staff to track and maintain students’ *IPRC* history and student/parent demographic information. In September 2005, the *OCDSB* moved the information from the *SPTS* to a central student database called Trillium. During our on-site visitation to schools, administrative staff expressed frustrations over the challenges of locating student data that had been transferred from the *SPTS* system to the central Trillium system. An essential part of quality assurance is the easy availability of accurate information on system/student data. As well, school staff indicated an overuse of e-mail by central staff attempting to obtain information which already exists on the central database or central files. While the transition to new management systems is not easy and the new central student database will be more efficient, the degree to which such transitions impose stress in the field and take teachers away from service to students cannot be underestimated¹².

A second important aspect of data gathering is its use in research. When new programs and/or system strategies are put into place, a review plan and data-gathering mechanism should be set up. The Reviewers found no data collection in place to examine the effectiveness of special education programs put into place in recent years. There seems to be a heavy reliance on anecdotal reports, usually from those who have a vested interest in the continuance of the program or strategy. Not only is this an unreliable measure of value, it adds to inequity because the less-educated parents, or those with weak language skills, cannot provide the compelling ‘stories’ that influence decision-making in the absence of hard data. As *OCDSB* resources decrease, as they inevitably will as the student population decreases, the importance of good research data will be essential to sound decision-making. Increasing the amount of evidence-based instruction occurring in the system does require that base-line

¹¹ The Thames Valley Board currently has a good inventory management system in place for special education equipment and learning supports.

¹² A number of submissions were received on this issue. The comment, “The expansion and continuous revision of the *IEP* format has become the most significant factor in reducing teacher-student contact time and subsequently, student success” typified the feedback from the field.

information be collected systemically prior to the introduction of new program initiatives or revision of existing programs.

4.6 Communication Networks

4.6.1 Internal

Communication issues were frequently raised at all levels by many individuals, including central staff, schools and parent communities. Work has been done by the Communications & Information Services of the Board to establish a quality external communication plan. However, it is paramount that a school board also develops and maintains good *internal* communication procedures and practices, so that central decisions reach all staff, and the information can be shared consistently, in a timely way, with the appropriate school personnel. The common practice has been to share new special education direction and protocols or information at teacher workshop sessions, thereby leaving those staff not in attendance ignorant of what is current. The school staff indicated that special education information shared by the central superintendents at principals' meetings does not always reach the *LST* and *SELC* staff.

Many school boards use weekly electronic newsletters to keep central staff up-to-date on policies, new department directions, professional development opportunities, department initiatives and information on best practices researched by Board personnel. Such a newsletter is usually a collaborative effort with input from all the professional groups and central consultants. Internally, whatever methods are used, more ways must be found to tap into the wealth of knowledge found in the central special education staff and experienced principals on a more regular basis.

4.6.2 External

Parents with identified children with special needs have particular communication needs when it comes to services being available from the Board. They need to know about the *IPRC process*, get timely responses to their calls for information and reports on their children's progress. While the schools generally indicated that they were prompt to respond to telephone calls, parents gave many examples where important telephone calls were not returned time and again. Also, parents felt that there was insufficient information available to them regarding pathway options for students with exceptionalities. In special education, in particular, because parents are often dealing with difficult decisions, direct lines of two-way communication with the schools are critical, not only to decrease parent stress, but also for the ongoing support and success of their children. In responding to questions about the quality of parent-school communications, some school staffs indicated many parents contact senior staff or trustees about issues, before they give the school or teacher an opportunity to address and resolve the matter. Whether this is the culture of the system or simply a few isolated examples, it does illustrate how communication channels can break down and negative attitudes grow if all levels of the organization do not work closely together in a supportive way. It must be clear that all staff members are accountable to the Director or his designate, not to individual trustees or members of the public.

The *OCDSB* Parent Guide for the *IPRC* was available at the schools to assist parents to navigate through the process. With the depth of expertise and experience of the central and professional staff, the Reviewers were surprised not to find 'user-friendly' pamphlets, fact sheets or best practices on special education-related information that could be provided to staff or parents. Central staff assigned to community agencies or committees should also be providing regular updates on new directions, or on decisions which impact on the delivery of

special education at the school, to all staff on a regular basis. Many community agencies and groups have formed excellent working relationships with specific schools. It is important that the types of expertise and knowledge gained from these partnerships be shared on a wider basis with the family or cluster of schools to build staff capacity at the school level. There is a particular need for this kind of cooperation and communication in the sphere of mental health problems, estimated to affect between 15 to 25% of our population.¹³ While the majority of Ottawa's children and youth are doing reasonably well, there are many who face significant challenges every day. School boards must work closely with existing community partners to increase support and services in mental health for these young people.

5.0 GOVERNANCE, DIRECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Boards of education, as publicly-funded institutions, work within a clearly established framework. Over many years, boards have created protocols, procedures and practices that are designed to serve as checks and balances in the effective operation of the system. As a result, there is usually a process of decision-making in place that brings the political wishes of trustees and the professional advice of the senior educational staff into an open dialogue. In an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, this decision-making process, while not always harmonious, works in the best interest of the whole system. However, if there is mistrust, if the focus is *not* on the whole, or if the boundaries of the defined roles are over-stepped, the system ceases to work well. Furthermore, energies on all sides are expended on territorial and procedural issues and attention is taken away from the critical tasks of setting and maintaining system direction.

5.1 Governance

The Review Team is somewhat reluctant to raise the issue of governance because it is not part of its written mandate. However, from reading Board minutes and the records of advisory committee meetings, it was apparent early in the review process that the present system of special education in the OCDSB has a lot to do with a particular approach to governance. With all its inherent problems and challenges, special education services in the OCDSB are in large part the result of decisions that have been made, or not made, within the political arena. To ignore this would be to do a disservice to the many hard-working individuals who try to meet the needs of exceptional children in all levels, and to the parents who struggle to get support for their children.

The roles and responsibilities of the elected officials who have governance over the system are quite clearly spelled out in legislation, as are the roles of the senior staff. These can be found in the Board's most recent Special Education Plan (2004-05). However, the written directions and what actually happens in practice within any organization, may not match. A number of Ontario boards have wrestled with this problem in recent years and have tried to develop stronger working protocols.¹⁴

¹³ Prevalence of mental health problems in children and youth ranges from 15 – 25% (Offord, 1987). Depression is rising in children and youth with rates in youth as high as 25 % (Jacobsen, et al, 2002). Children whose mental health problems are untreated disrupt classes (CMHO, 2005).

¹⁴ For example, the Waterloo District School Board has recently drafted a new board Governance Policy (Version 1.5, February 2006). This is available on the WDSB website.

There are at least three components of system decision-making that exist presently in *OCDSB* that, because of governance issues, have compromised the quality of the decisions made centrally over the last few years: the work demands of central staff, the process of consultation and the adequacy of the data used.

5.1.1 The Work of Central Special Education Staff

As noted earlier, the Review Team was impressed by the expertise and deep knowledge of many staff members at every level in the *OCDSB*. However, their authority needs to be respected and valued more, and to have a greater influence on decisions made by the Board. Much of the time of the central special education staff is spent responding to requests from trustees and parents groups, collecting information, attending meetings and writing reports, rather than working in the field to support teachers, students and parents, or monitoring the quality of services being delivered. As a consequence, the quality of written reports prepared within the Board was found to be excellent, but the quality of the programs within the field was, too often, found to be below expectations. The Review Team concluded that serious gaps and weaknesses in service exist within the *OCDSB*, in large part because the majority of energy, time and resources have been deliberately directed by the elected officials to those students who have strong advocacy from parents and organizations, leaving the vulnerable students in regular classrooms without the supports they need to enable them to be successful.

5.1.2 Public Consultation Model

The *OCDSB* has put into place an elaborate school community consultation process that is required prior to the final approval of any proposed changes to such things as specialized class placements, the elimination or reduction of particular services, etc., by the Board. The approval process can take more than six months to complete. In the focus groups, the Review Team heard that staff members were reluctant to propose even modest changes to the model of delivery and services in special education, recognizing that it would mean having to get the support of overly-extended senior staff members who would then have to obtain approvals through *SEAC*, the Education Committee and the Board of Trustees before going into a lengthy process of consultation. Some discussion is needed to refine this model to ensure that decisions are made in a timely way and that the kind of field-based initiative and innovation that keeps a system progressive and current is not stifled.

The overall model of decision-making, including the consultation process, should fit within a framework. Once the plan is approved, no specific decision that fits within the plan should be subject to a piecemeal consultation process. If there are compelling reasons to adjust the plan, this should be done in an integrated way. When this approach is not taken, issues pop up randomly and decisions at every level become fragmented and more vulnerable to subjectivity. The Special Education Advisory Committee (*SEAC*) should play a critical role in ensuring that a system plan is followed and that individual lobbyists do not direct attention away from its responsibility to consider the needs of *all* students and the *overall* good of the system.

5.1.3 Gaps in Information

In order to make equitable decisions as to how limited resources will be allocated across the system, trustees need to know what *negative* impacts any given decision will have. While it is clearly incumbent on administrators to provide this information, the Review Team noted that it was seldom requested. For example, the statement made by elected officials and parent advocates that Gifted classes are “revenue neutral” does not stand up when one looks at the associated costs of transportation. In fact, 42% of the special education children who

are buses are going to Gifted classes. The amount of busing associated with special education in the OCDSB has had negative impact across the whole system, adding to the number of triple runs required and the establishment of some unreasonably early elementary school openings and end-of-day closing.¹⁵ While parents may argue vociferously for the retention of certain classes and sites, trustees need to know, not only *why* the central staff members are speaking to the closure of those classes or changes in sites, but also what *negative* impacts will result from failing to follow their recommendations. If it was known, for example, that there would be a *direct cost* to other high needs students if a system class was kept open when it failed to meet the criteria for remaining so, a decision which has increased inequity in the system might not have been made.

5.2 System Direction

The Review Team could find no current Board framework document that included a statement of the philosophy of special education within the OCDSB, or the strategies to make it operational within the context of a three- to five-year plan. The plan submitted to the Ministry (2004-05) contained only a brief, general Mission Statement and eighteen (18) standards for the delivery of special education in the OCDSB. These standards cover a range of areas set out through the OCDSB's consultation process, including a model for the provision of special education, roles and responsibilities and the coordination of services with other ministries or agencies, but do not provide direction.

The two predecessor boards that formed the OCDSB had quite different models of special education. These had evolved over many years and were underpinned by commonly understood beliefs about the role of student support services within the respective organizations. In the intervening years since amalgamation, no coherent philosophy or clear statements of direction have been articulated for the new board. No Ottawa-Carleton plan has been developed. This work should have been the focus of the trustees who, in collaboration with senior staff, are charged with creating and maintaining such a plan. However, the Board appears to have become stuck in time as it tried to make the old Ottawa model of special education fit into the new, expanded area. As energies went into dealing with the inevitable territorial, financial and equality battles, details took priority and a central vision was lost. It also appears that mistrust increased and collaboration decreased.

In the philosophy found in the Ministry's expert panel document, *Education for All*, there is a significant shift away from an approach to special education delivery that moves large numbers of students away from the central curriculum and into specialized class programs. Instead, it supports the universal design approach in which the range of options continuum referred to earlier remains, but there is a primary emphasis on regular classroom support and a secondary emphasis on placements *outside* the regular program. Should this document form the basis for both policy and funding changes, the OCDSB will have to rethink many parts of its present delivery system. The Review Team recognizes that the Board is at an important juncture in its history. If the board can look at the delivery of special education in the light of the realities of 2006, set out a realistic philosophy of service delivery and provide a genuine continuum of options, it may be able to regain its former position as one of the leading boards in Ontario.

¹⁵ Reference has been made to younger children taking long bus rides to schools who now begin their work day prior to 8:00 a.m. However, the problem of children (particularly teenagers) returning home at 2:15 p.m. to homes in which parents work until 4:00 or 5:00 p.m., is also cause for concern.

5.3 Accountability

The matter of standards within any organization is fundamental. Although there is often a good deal of talk about standards, they are empty statements without clear expectations, quality assurance indicators, lines of accountability and adequate monitoring procedures. In most bureaucratic organizations, it is the central administrative staff that is held accountable for the maintenance of agreed-upon standards by both the governing body and the employee groups. However, the ability of senior and consultative staff in special education to do the work related to monitoring, not to mention putting in place quality assurance indicators, depends on what other demands are made on their time. As noted already, the Review Team found that much of the time of these people is spent on paperwork generated firstly, by the trustees and, secondly, by the Ministry, leaving them little time for the quality assurance and planning parts of their roles. As is the case with many, if not all, of the school based Learning Support Teachers, the central staff members are unable to use their expertise to maintain and improve the system for the students because the emphasis within the system is on *paper accountability*.

It is interesting to note that there are perceptions in the field that the OCDSB is top-heavy with central administrative and support staff. The Review Team heard this from parents and teachers who simply do not see any value that central special education leaders add to the system. In fact, the Review Team believes that the Board has excellent people in the central roles, and could use more of them in many areas. It may be that multidisciplinary teams of what are now 'central' support staff members should be deployed within the regional superintendencies. This would make them geographically closer to those they serve, would increase their accountability and would build more flexibility into the services offered within each superintendent's various 'families of schools.' Whatever structure of service is chosen, as the system moves forward, it will depend heavily on these people to be in the field, making sure policies are implemented and standards of practice are raised. The system Autism Team, which includes a Psychologist, Speech and Language Pathologist, Learning Support Consultant, Social Worker, and Itinerant Educational Assistant, is an excellent example of a well-functioning inter-disciplinary team. Although it is over-stretched with a too heavy workload, it has provided direct school support, workshops and direction on best practices for implementation in the classroom and schools.

5.4 Financial Resources

The OCDSB financial statements, staffing data and special education/student services budget (July 2005) were reviewed. The financial staff indicated that the Board's revised estimated expenditures in special education for the present school year exceed the Ministry grants by over seven million dollars (December 2005); this being 10% over the budget in this area. The Ministry of Education's 2005-2006 report (Schedule 10A) included the teaching, professional, paraprofessional, administration and support staffing allocations, as well as the operating budgets, summer programs, staff development and new initiatives. Boards in the province can exceed the special education grants allocated in support to students, but these additional funds must be found elsewhere in the Board funding envelopes received from the Ministry.

In response to questions raised by SEAC members in the fall of 2004 regarding the allocation of costs reported against the Board's special education grants, an Ad Hoc Committee of the Board was established to examine the determination and accounting for the costs of special education. The committee examined the Ministry of Education documents on special education expenditures, reporting instructions and the code of account directions. The report,

dated March 9, 2005, identified expenditure categories and established the common standard of practice that will support consistency and comparability of budget information for the Board. The report indicates that the OCDSB charges to the special education envelope the following major expenditures: all costs of teachers of self-contained classes, Learning Support Teachers, Itinerant Special Education Teachers, Educational Assistants and Professional Support Services Personnel staff, summer programs, including all student assessment costs. The transportation costs for students accessing specialized programs have not been considered in the special education expenditures for the delivery of programs and services or for determining the location of these programs.

In the existing Ministry's Instructions, the special education grants refer to, "*Students receiving special education programs and services, which can be broadly interpreted as students who are receiving accommodations or modifications to the curriculum.*" The interpretation of the Ministry reporting instructions has created minor variations in school boards reporting on expenditures related to special education across the province. This variation mainly occurs in the charges of Social Worker staff expenditures against the general school operations envelope. The allocation for special education under the student-focused funding model is intended to cover the incremental costs of providing special education programs and services. For the integrated and resource-withdrawal programs, expenditures relating to the regular classroom teachers, supplies and other "regular" expenditures are not to be coded to special education. The Ministry's Special Education Per-Pupil Amount (SEPPA) funding is allocated to school boards on the basis of total enrolment. The SEPPA funds recognize the cost of providing additional assistance to the majority of students with special needs.

The proposed new provincial funding model for special education is expected early in 2006. Hopefully, the model will clarify many of these interpretations and provide long-term funding stability to school boards. Presently, the OCDSB allocation of special education funds provides minimum support for students with exceptionalities in the regular classroom and for the re-integration of students from system specialized programs. With the expected release of a new Ministry funding model in special education and updated reporting instructions for school boards, the Board will need to review the expenditure categories. It is important that any change to the Board's accounting of special education funds does not increase the paper work of the professional staff, thus, taking valuable time directly away from the support and services to students, staff and parents.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Team has given much thought to the complex, multi-faceted issues raised during its work. It is clear that the OCDSB, a leading board in the delivery of special education services, has lost ground in recent years, in both focus and direction. In trying to be everything to everybody, attention has been on *numbers* of placements and classes, and on ever-increasing *demands*, but not on *quality* or *equity*. Now, unrealistic expectations have been raised in some areas, while other areas have been ignored or short-changed. There exists a plethora of sites, programs and teaching methods that appear to have grown in a random way in the absence of strong central direction and coordination. In addition, there is a hierarchy of perceived status in the relative value of the schools and programs within the system, such that many parents and teachers will go to great lengths to avoid the lowest levels. Pride is more in individual rather than shared values.

The Review Team has had much experience within Ontario education, including work at the provincial level, and has come to the conclusion that, whereas some recommendations can be dealt with much sooner, there are fundamental issues, such as those described above, that will require at least three to five years to address. Therefore, the recommendations contained in this section have been grouped into two categories: long-term and short-term. Nevertheless, although time will be a key factor in the implementation process, it is essential that all the recommendations be seen as parts of an integrated whole and addressed accordingly.

6.1 Long-Term Recommendations

Having completed the process outlined in Section 2.2 and arising from the areas and issues outlined in Section 4.0 and Section 5.0, the External Review Team recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

That the Board set up a representative panel that includes trustees, senior staff and experts from the field to undertake the development of a comprehensive plan for special education for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

Operational Elements

The panel will need to:

- Establish a fundamental philosophy of special education based on, but not limited to, the directions outlined in this report and the most recent Ministry documents and policy statements. The philosophy will include the guiding principles upon which all the structural and operational elements of the plan will be based;
- Consider the implications for school operations, transportation, curriculum and support services, of such components of the report as the placement of specialized programs closer to home or community schools and the provision of a real range of quality programs and services and
- Set out goals and stages of implementation with clear timelines attached to each goal and stage.

Challenges

There are many challenges inherent in the process of change. The culture within the OCDSB has created many 'sacred cows.' It will be necessary for the representative panel to begin with a completely clean slate and to be constantly vigilant to the fact that the Board must serve the needs of *all* its student and must base its decisions about best practice on expert opinion and field research, not on political pressure.

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

That the Board empower the Director and Senior Staff to undertake a thorough review of the organizational structure within the OCDSB in order to more closely align the work of Student Services with Curriculum, to better integrate the functions of all senior departments and to decentralize the majority of central special education support staff and place them within the field superintendency structure.

Operational Elements

Within an organization, the horizontal lines (inter-departmental) of communication, operation and accountability are as critical as the vertical lines (top to field). Because the Board and administrative workloads have grown since amalgamation, but there has been little change in the operational structure, the departments, particularly Student Services, operate largely in isolation. Any re-alignment strategy will need to coordinate and integrate the department functions; where possible, moving some central staff out into the field. This will allow the lines of monitoring and accountability (vertical) and the lines of communication and integration (horizontal) to be more clear and effective. A revitalized organizational structure must be in place prior to the implementation of the special education plan referred to under *Recommendation One*.

Challenges

The greatest challenge in organizational restructuring is to plan implementation in stages in order to minimize disruptions to the system. For example, where programs and/or classes are going to be altered, re-located or closed, it may be wiser to take a *phase out* approach which allows students time to adjust to the changes being made. Similarly, staff changes could be staggered in such a way that service delivery is not compromised. Difficult as it is to accomplish these things without disruption and anxiety, it is possible to do so if attention is given to setting out the stages of the implementation plan in detail and then ensuring that all those affected by them are kept informed.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:

That a small working committee made up of trustees, senior administrators and an outside facilitator be set up to consider ways to bring a stronger sense of common purpose to the delivery of special education within the governance and management sectors and to build a renewed respect for both the professional and guardianship roles inherent in the organizational structure.

Operational Elements

The committee would:

- Review the legislation regarding roles and responsibilities within the governance and operation of Ontario school boards;
- Clarify the understanding of these roles as they relate to the daily operation of the organization and to the meetings of the board and its committees;
- Develop standards of conduct or protocols where deemed necessary;

- Suggest ways to enhance the working relationships within the Board in the best interests of the organization as a whole.

Challenges

If a revitalization of the delivery of special education is to occur, there must be a stronger, more mutually respectful level of dialogue and decision-making between staff and elected trustees. It is not easy to change a culture that has developed over a number of years unless the will is there to do so.

6.2. Short-Term Recommendations (1 to 3 years)

RECOMMENDATION FOUR:

The Student Services Department put together a framework document which sets out standards for the delivery of special education programs and services – policies, protocols, guidelines, program indicators, assessments, placement procedures, resource allocations, reporting procedures, etc.

Operational Elements

The Review Team is aware that a number of protocols, job descriptions, etc., already exist within the system. These will need to be pulled together and updated. Board staff members have started to work on developing the best practices for each of the exceptionalities in the elementary panel and their work will become an important part of the manual. In addition, the following tasks will be part of the process:

- Develop clear and specific program indicators for each of the specialized programs. These should include classroom organizations (with sample layouts), timetables, teaching strategies, resource materials, intervention strategies, appropriate assistive technology, and assessment strategies;
- Set out expectations regarding effective communication and reporting strategies with parents;
- Identify the links between the Ontario curriculum and the specialized programs, the *SELC* groups and the work done by the identified students within the regular program;
- Establish protocols to be followed when students enter secondary school from Grade 8, leave a specialized program and return to the home class, or change schools; and
- Set expectations for the proper use, updating and passing on of the *OSRs*; perhaps, setting target dates or times by which *OSRs* for new students (internal transfers) will be in the receiving school.

Challenges

While there were pockets of good practices observed in *OCDSB*, with the entry of so many inexperienced teachers into the profession without special education qualification or experience, a framework document is essential. This document will require some central staff time up front to develop, but it would save many hours of staff time responding or reacting to school staff or parent issues. The biggest challenge is not the *development* of the

document, but its consistent implementation across the system. Practices, procedures and protocols vary widely across the system and, where expectations are set out, these are not always followed.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE:

The Student Services Department develop detailed guidelines regarding the roles, responsibilities and accountability of support and professional staff within the special education delivery model. This information may become part of the manual referred to above.

Operational Elements

Some of the main tasks to be included in the development of the personnel guidelines:

- Clarify the role, membership and expectations of the In-School Collaborative Team and the support role of the Multi-disciplinary Team, including best practices for the tracking and monitoring of students with special needs;
- Review the role of the *LST* and *SELC* in view of the changing expectations to build greater support and expertise to support students in the *regular* classroom. (These positions must be looked upon as an educational opportunity to attract the most experienced classroom teachers);
- Set out minimum requirements for teachers who work in specialized programs. This would include a strong curriculum background and knowledge of the exceptionality. (These positions must be looked upon as an educational opportunity to attract the most experienced classroom teachers.);
- Reassert the expectation that *EAs* are to be active members of the school team and are to be included in regular professional development;
- Expand the role of the central support team, providing them with more time for direct services to schools (student assessments/intervention strategies), building staff capacity in regular and specialized classrooms, and delivering in-service to students. This would include delivering in-service to administrators, *LST*, *SELC*, *EAs* and teachers, developing appropriate curriculum resources for classrooms and modelling good practices, as needed; and
- Outline the role played by field superintendents and families of schools in gathering and sharing information on best practices and student needs. The development and implementation of program indicators will strengthen the supervision and accountability of high quality special education programs across the system.

Challenges

In the absence of tight guidelines in special education, some staff members have created their own role descriptions, programs and working standards. This situation will require action on a number of fronts, including staff in-service over several sessions, in-class coaching, the development of clearly articulated program “look-fors” for the principals and follow-up monitoring by the field superintendents.

RECOMMENDATION SIX:

The Student Services Department, in conjunction with other central departments and professional associations, develop a multi-year professional development plan that targets all staff, including, administrators, classroom teachers, special education, educational assistants, and central staff , to increase the knowledge and needs of students with exceptionalities.

Operational Elements

In setting out an integrated, system professional-development plan, those charged with the overall task should:

- Review the concept of universal design in terms of its use as both a framework in which all curriculum areas can fit and a vehicle to raise academic standards across the system;
- Coordinate the input from all departments into a coherent plan with staged implementation targets;
- Determine levels of content and complexity of in-service sessions in order to accommodate the needs of very experienced staff and those new to their roles;
- Ensure that presenters of professional development sessions are *consistent* in the degree to which their information matches the system messages, as well as being the best qualified to provide these sessions;
- Require that all curriculum presentations for staff include the expected modifications and accommodations for identified students;
- Target groups for whom certain professional development may be mandatory; and
- Set out a system professional development plan that can be effectively communicated to all staff prior to the start of a new school year.

Challenges

The coordination of the work from a number of departments and individuals that have traditionally worked alone will not be easy. *OCDSB* staff members are used to having a smorgasbord of choices and, while many will welcome the more coordinated approach, others may not. The Review Team did hear a number of negative comments from teachers who had been to system workshops and found them to be ‘useless.’ This underscores the need to provide differing levels of sessions on the same topic, so that those who are knowledgeable do not feel as if they are being ‘spoken down’ to, and the inexperienced do not feel overwhelmed. Another challenge in creating strong professional development offerings for those working with special education students, is to find ways to increase the involvement of the organizations in the community that represent the areas of exceptionality and often have the most current expertise related to effective learning strategies. Finally, there is an issue to deal with in terms of the timing of professional development sessions. Whenever staff members, including school administrators and resource personnel, are out of the school for professional development sessions or meetings, the students are not receiving their services and the quality control functions of the leader are put on hold. The problem is compounded in those schools or classes that have difficulty getting supply help. Whatever plan for professional development is developed, it must consider ways to minimize these negative effects.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN:

The Student Services Department include in any submission prepared for Board approval, where feasible, an option for consideration, with the true costing of the proposals, including expenditures related to transportation, facility changes or renovations, staff training and the impact to other programs in the system.

Operational Elements

Once a comprehensive, system special education plan is put into place, it will be the principles, priorities and process included in the plan that will direct Board decisions related to this area. In the meantime, it will be important to have the best possible information in front of trustees as they work to confirm, amend or reject administrative recommendations. To this end, Student Services staff should:

- Ensure that comprehensive rationales are provided for all recommendation going to Board;
- Set out the true costing of each recommendation (including transportation, staffing, facilities, etc.), and the impact for resources or staffing on other students or programs within the system;
- Include additional options with pro and con statements; and
- Provide current information about gaps in service, waiting lists, etc., so that trustees can weigh particular recommendations against the overall state of special education delivery within the system.

Challenges

In reviewing the Board and Committee minutes related to special education, the Review Team observed that the Board or Committee expended extensive amounts of time and energy on formulating decisions. In part, this was due to the lack of a comprehensive special education plan, but it was also apparent that they did not have enough information about the impact their decisions would have on resources, finance and other programs or services within the system. Much of the input that informed past decisions came from those parents and/or organizations with a particular interest in the outcome of the discussions. It will be a challenge to bring a more 'big picture' perspective to the decision-making process and to return some equity and balance into meeting the needs of all students.. However, as there is an increase in system-thinking, people will become more proactive and less reactive, and will begin to see their roles in the context of a bigger agenda.

7.0 SUMMATION

The Review Team recognizes and compliments the *OCDSB's* Special Education Advisory Steering Committee for the leadership, organization and processes put in place to encourage staff, parents and community partners to actively participate in the Phase II special education review initiative. There was a great deal of input from the many parents and members of the public at large that came to open meetings or communicated in writing. School staffs were welcoming and spoke openly about their concerns. As stated in several places in the report, the *Ottawa-Carleton District School Board* has tremendous expertise, and many dedicated and committed staff, to serve students with special needs in the system. The Review Team did find, however, that the Board's special education delivery model for

programs and services is fragmented and inconsistent at present; it lacks cohesion and a sense of direction. Gaps and inequities are to be found. In addition, those quality assurance elements that would be expected to be found in a board with a long history of delivering strong special education are missing.

The Phase I Review report, the recent Ministry's Expert Panel report on special education, alongside this Phase II Review report, should give sufficient direction to both the form and substance of a plan to re-vitalize the system. There is no doubt that the planning and implementation processes must deal with the recommendations in an integrated way, must include all stakeholders and must focus on a forward-looking vision for the system. It is anticipated that, as the guiding principles of special education are articulated more clearly and the delivery of special education programs and services becomes more coherent, the pockets of excellence now seen in the system will become the norm, rather than the exception and that the *OCDSB* will again become a model for other school boards.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Jean Hewitt

Gerry Clarke

Appendices:

- A. *OCDSB* Special Education Phase 1 Executive Summary.**
- B. *OCDSB* Special Education Review Advisory and Steering Committee.**
- C. *OCDSB* – Number of Students Identified by Exceptionality.**

Executive Summary

The Special Education Survey was conducted in September 2004 as part of a "Review of Special Education Programs and Services." Selected staff and parents were asked to provide feedback on how they were dealing with changes in special education delivery and to identify ways to help meet the needs of *all* students.

Respondents' quantitative responses were analyzed for four groups: regular classroom teachers, school principals, parents of non-identified children, and parents of formally identified special needs children. Of the 5100 questionnaires sent out for these groups, 1212 questionnaires were returned (24% return rate). The return rates ranged from 21% -23% for teachers and parents to 66% for school principals. Because the numbers of questionnaires returned for the various groups are relatively low, *findings presented here should not be interpreted as representing the [district] as a whole.*

Questions asked of regular classroom teachers and school principals differed from those asked of parents; therefore, findings for teachers and principals are shown separately from those of parents.

Findings for Regular Classroom Teachers and School Principals

Background Information

1. Types of schools teachers and principals represented

Teachers and principals who responded represented all types of schools (i.e., JK-3/5/6, JK-8, 4/6/7-8, and 9-12), all types of programs (i.e., English/Core French, EFI, MFI, LFI, Alternative, secondary FI, and Adaptive), and all types of school populations (e.g., Beacon or near Beacon schools, ESL and IPRC'd students including gifted).

2. School accessibility for persons with disabilities

Three-quarters of teachers (75% -76%) indicated their schools were accessible for persons with disabilities.

3. Valued/respected member of the school multi-disciplinary team

More than three-quarters of teachers (83% -77%) felt they were valued/respected members of the school multi-disciplinary team.

Program Delivery

4. Availability of congregated system classes

Almost one-half of elementary school teachers (46%) and more than one-half of elementary school principals (52%) indicated their schools offered congregated system classes. One-quarter of secondary school teachers (25%) and almost one-half of secondary school principals (47%) indicated their schools offered such classes.

5. Effectiveness of SELC, VP, and LST allocations in meeting the needs of students

SELC allocations were rated as very effective or fairly effective by over one-half of elementary school teachers (59%) and principals (71%) and by about one-quarter of secondary school teachers (22%) and principals (30%).

VP allocations were rated as very effective or fairly effective by two-thirds of elementary school principals (69%) and almost one-half of secondary school principals (46%). LST allocations were rated as very effective or fairly effective by three-quarters of elementary school principals (78%) and one-half of secondary school principals (50%).

6. Number of non-identified students receiving support

Elementary school principals indicated, on average, 29 non-identified students were receiving support (e.g., LST, SELC, EA, Administrative and Support). Secondary school principals indicated, on average, 21 non-identified students were receiving support.

7. Modifications to LST and/or SELC allocations

More than one-quarter of elementary school principals (28%) and almost one-quarter of secondary school principals (20%) indicated they modified LST and/or SELC allocations.

8. Specific groups of students teachers taught

Teachers taught various groups of students: 85% -97% taught IPRC'd students, 53% -75% taught Gifted students, 72% -63% taught ESL students, and 46% -64% taught French Immersion students.

9. Factors staff selected as the most helpful in meeting student needs

- a) *support of psychologists, speech/ language pathologists, social workers, translators, signers, braillists, EAs* Selected by all teachers and principals.
- b) *timetabling arrangements* Selected by elementary school teachers and principals.
- c) *skill level of staff* Selected by all teachers (not asked of principals).
- d) *availability of materials/resources/technology/training* Selected by secondary school teachers.
- e) *organization of classroom program delivery* Selected by elementary school principals.
- f) *school layout (portables, closed classrooms, etc.)* Selected by secondary school principals.

10. Factors staff selected as the most hindrance in meeting student needs

- a) *number of students in need* Selected by all teachers and principals.
- b) *extra demands on your/LST time; e. g., paperwork, IPRC process, IEPs, ISA, referrals to community agencies* (Teachers were asked about their time; principals were asked about Learning Support Teacher time.)
Selected by elementary school teachers and all principals.
- c) *diversity of student needs* Selected by all teachers.
- b) *(lack of) support of psychologists, speech/ language pathologists, social workers, translators, signers, braillists, EAs* Selected by all principals.
- e) *severity of student needs* Selected by secondary school teachers.

11. Effectiveness of SELC support for students with various Ministry categories of exceptionality

Elementary school teachers' ratings of SELC support as very effective or fairly effective in meeting the needs of exceptional students were highest for Learning Disability, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Physical Disability, and Blind and Low Vision (75%-70%) and lowest for Giftedness (49%). Secondary school teachers' ratings of SELC support were highest for Physical Disability, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Autism, Blind and Low Vision, Developmental Disability, and Learning Disability (87% -71%) and lowest for Language Impairment (51%).

12. Effectiveness of inclusion in the regular classroom

One-half or more of teachers (49% -58%) and more than one-half of principals (58% -69%) thought that inclusion in the regular classroom was effective. An additional 19% -23% of teachers and 18% -38% of principals indicated inclusion was successful for some students and not for others.

13. Effectiveness of community resources, in-school teams, multi-disciplinary teams, and central teams

In-school teams were rated as very effective or fairly effective by most teachers and principals (80% -99%). Multi-disciplinary teams (LSC, psychologist, SLP, social workers) were rated as very effective or fairly effective by about two-thirds of teachers (63% -71%) and principals (74% -71%). Community resources (i.e., CCAC, OCTC, Section 20 programs) were rated as very effective or fairly effective by more than one-half of teachers (59% -51%) and by two-thirds or more of principal (89% -67%). Central teams (i.e., ASD, BST) were rated as very effective or fairly effective by more than one-third of elementary school teachers (44%), one-quarter of secondary school teachers (24%), and two-thirds or more of principals. (66% -78%).

14. Degree to which demands and expectations of parents, staff, and administration are able to be met

The degree to which teachers and principals were able to meet the special education demands and expectations of parents, staff, and administration was judged to be *very well* or *fairly well* by three-quarters of more of teachers (parents: 74% -75%, staff: 84% -84%, administration: 85% -84%) and principals (parents: 84% -93%, staff: 74% -87%, administration: 86% -93%).

Professional Development

15. Special Education qualifications

About one-half of teachers (46% -55%), more than one-third of elementary school principals (37%) and almost one-half of secondary school principals (47%) did not hold any Special Education qualifications. Of those that did, the qualification level held by teachers was most frequently Part I (28%) and for principals was “all parts” (32% -20%). More than one-third of elementary school teachers (40%), one-quarter of secondary school teachers (28%), and fewer principals (12% -8%) had upgraded their Special Education qualifications lately.

16. Professional development sessions related to special education

Less than one-third of teachers (31% -19%) and more than one-half of principals (63% -53%) attended one or more sessions related to special education during the 2003-2004 school year. Of those who attended one or more sessions offered by the [district], more than one-third of elementary school teachers (43%), more than two-thirds of secondary school teachers (71%), and more than three-quarters of principals (77% -100%) did so during school time. If sessions were offered during 2004-2005, teachers and principals would be most interested in topics on Modification/Accommodation/Differentiation, on Behaviour Strategies (teachers only), and on Anger Management (elementary principals only).

Findings for Parents of Elementary and Secondary School Students

Centrally Available Information on Children of Parents Who Responded

Parents' children represented all types of schools (i.e., JK-3/5/6, JK-8, 4/6/7-8, and 9-12), were from every grade level (JK-12), and were in English/Core French, EFI, MFI, LFI, and secondary FI programs. More than one-half of elementary school parents (58%) and almost two-thirds of secondary school parents (64%) had children who were formally identified as having special needs. Of elementary and secondary school parents who had non-identified children, 51% -56% completed questionnaires for females, 49%-43% for males. Of elementary and secondary school parents who had formally identified children, 34% -42% completed questionnaires for females, 66% -57% for males.

Questions Asked of Parents

1. Choice of school/program

More than one-third of elementary school parents of formally identified children (41%) and more than one-half of secondary school parents of formally identified children (53%) indicated that their choice of school/program for their children was influenced by special education delivery in the OCDSB.

2. Understanding of special education programs and services

Almost one-half of elementary school parents of non-identified children (48%) and more than one-third of secondary school parents of non-identified children (42%) rated their understanding of special education programs and services in the OCDSB as excellent, good, or adequate. Most elementary and secondary school parents of formally identified children (82%-85%) rated their understanding as excellent, good, or adequate.

3. Benefit of having children formally identified

If parents suspected that their children had special needs, almost two-thirds (66%) who (a) knew their children had not been formally identified through the IPRC process, or (b) did not know if their children had been formally identified, thought it would be beneficial to have their children formally identified as special education children.

4. Extra help needed last year

One-quarter of elementary school parents of non-identified children (26%) and more than one-third of secondary school parents of non-identified children (39%) felt their children needed extra help last year. Most elementary school parents of formally identified children (81%) and more than one-half of secondary school parents of formally identified children (59%) felt their children needed extra help last year.

The subjects/skills elementary school parents most frequently selected for extra help were Language Arts (58% -72%), organizational skills (47% -60%) and Math (42% -65%). Secondary school parents selected Math (75% -71%).

Parents of non-identified children who felt their children needed extra help last year most frequently indicated that their children received extra help regularly from someone in their home (53% -43%). It was parents themselves who suggested extra help was required. Parents of formally identified children most frequently indicated that the school was the place where their children received extra help (81% -57%) and that school or [district] staff suggested extra help was required.

5. Assessment

If parents were asked to give permission for their children to be assessed, almost all did so (97% - 100%). Parents of formally identified children indicated the length of time they were told they would have to wait for assessments was most frequently one to six months. The length of time they actually did wait was most frequently one to six months. About one-third of parents of non-identified children (29% -36%) and most parents of formally identified children (88%) indicated their children had been assessed to determine if they had special needs. The person who carried out the assessments was most frequently a psychologist outside the [district] (30% -55%). Information from the assessments was most frequently communicated to parents by report (63% -84%) and/or in person (60% -82%).

6. Support

Parents of non-identified children reported that support was most frequently provided at school by the regular classroom teacher (53% -41%). Parents of formally identified children reported that support was provided in a number of different ways. About two-thirds of all parents (62% -72%) indicated that the support their children received last year best met children's learning needs.

7. Placement

One-half of parents of formally identified children (48% -51%) had been advised that their children could benefit from placement in a system (congregated) class. Almost one-quarter of parents (24% - 18%) had been advised that there was no space available in congregated classes, SELC, LST, etc. in the placement they preferred for their children. For parents who had to wait for a different placement for their children, the wait time was most frequently less than six months.

8. Individual Education Plans

Most parents of formally identified children (93% -75%) indicated their children had IEPs. More than one-third were consulted by school staff prior, during, and/or after development of the IEPs. One-half of elementary school parents (53%) indicated that once IEPs were in place, they discussed them with school staff several times during the year. One-half of secondary school parents (54%) discussed IEPs once during the year.

Three-quarters or more of parents whose children were formally identified and had IEPs indicated they understood how their children's IEPs related to the program in the classroom (87% -89%), the program as delivered by the Learning Support Teacher or SELC (85% -78%), the services or accommodations their children received (86% -85%), the report card marks (75% -76%), and the IPRC determination record (73% -80%).

One-half of secondary school parents of formally identified children (52%) indicated their children had been involved in discussions for the development of their IEPs since reaching high school. More than one-third (39%) did not know their children could be involved.

9. Accommodations

Elementary school parents of formally identified children most frequently indicated accommodations were received through accommodation and support from the Learning Support Teacher. Secondary school parents most frequently indicated “accommodations only” were received. One-third of these secondary school parents believed that “accommodations only” represented the only support their children required to be successful in school. Some secondary school parents (12%) indicated they have been advised that accommodations are the only support available to special needs children at the secondary level.

10. Factors parents selected as the most helpful in meeting student needs

- a) *skills of teachers* Selected by all parents.
- b) *the total number of children in the class* Selected by all parents.
- c) *availability of materials/resources* Selected by parents of non-identified children.
- d) *the profile of the children being taught* Selected by secondary school parents of formally identified children.
- e) *support from Educational Assistant* Selected by elementary school parents of formally identified children.

11. Factors parents selected as the most hindrance in meeting student needs

- a) *the total number of children in the class* Selected by all parents.
- b) *diversity of children’s needs* Selected by all parents.
- c) *skills of teachers* Selected by parents of formally identified children and secondary parents of non-identified children.
- d) *severity of children’s needs* Selected by parents of non-identified children.
- e) *other factors* Selected by secondary school parents of formally identified children.

12. Parents’ input respected and considered by teachers and administration staff

Most parents (82%-93%) felt their input to their children’s learning needs and strengths was or was somewhat respected and considered by teachers and by administration staff (i.e., principal, vice-principal, guidance).

13. Workshops or information sessions parents would attend

Over one-half of parents of non-identified children (62% -54%) and most parents of formally identified children (91% -81%) would be interested in attending workshops or information sessions. The sessions parents of non-identified children would attend were on Individual Education Plans (32% -17%) and information related to their child’s exceptionality (30% -18%). Parents of formally identified children would attend information sessions related to their children’s exceptionality (57% -40%) and transitioning exceptional children to post-secondary education (54% -33%).

Questions for Parents of Identified Children

14. Exceptionalities and support

Elementary school parents most frequently indicated their children’s exceptionalities were Learning Disability (56%), Giftedness (24%), Language Impairment (12%), and Behaviour (10%). Secondary school parents most frequently indicated their children’s exceptionalities were Giftedness (42%), Learning Disability (41%), and Behaviour (8%). Almost one-third of elementary school parents (31%) indicated they had to move their children to another school/program in order to get the necessary support in school (not asked of secondary).

15. Identification procedures, notification of IPRC annual meetings, and attendance

Most parents (92%-84%) indicated they understood the procedures used to identify their children, and most (92% -82%) indicated they *always* receive notification from the school about the date of their children's annual IPRC meeting. Most parents (93% -90%) did attend the original meeting at which their children were formally identified. Most elementary school parents (82%) and more than one-half of secondary school parents (56%) indicated they *always* attend the annual IPRC meeting held each year to discuss their children's placement for the following school year. One-half of parents (53% - 50%) indicated they know what to do if they disagree with the identification or placement that is recommended at the IPRC meeting.

16. Children's placements

Almost three-quarters of parents (73%) believed that their children's placements best met their learning needs. According to elementary school parents, the most frequent placements on IPRC determination records for the 2003-2004 school year were regular classroom with support from the SERT/LST, Special Education Learning Centre (SELC), regular classroom with monitoring from the SERT/LST, and Gifted Congregated Program. According to secondary school parents, the most frequent placements were Gifted Congregated Program, regular classroom with support from the SERT/LST, and regular classroom with monitoring from the SERT/LST.

17. Transition plans to grade 9 and to post-secondary education/workplace

More than one-third of secondary school parents (40%) indicated that transition plans had been developed for their children's transition to grade 9. Of these parents, more than two-thirds felt the transition plans were being implemented. Less than one-quarter of secondary school parents (13%) indicated that plans had been developed for their children's transition to post secondary education/workplace. Of these parents, most felt that the transition plans were being implemented.

18. Parent Guide on Special Education/Child Services

More than one-third of elementary school parents (36%) and one-quarter of secondary school parents (24%) received a copy of the Parent Guide on Special Education/ Child Services prior to or at the IPRC meeting. Of the parents who received a copy, most (83% -83%) indicated it was very useful or somewhat useful.

Appendix B

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Special Education Program and Service Review Advisory Steering Committee

<u>Group</u>	<u>Representative(s)</u>
Superintendent of Student Services	Glenda Stevenson
Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils	Lamar Mason
Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils	Chris Ellis
Board Trustee	David Moen
Board Trustee	Bronwyn Funicello
Board Trustee	David Primeau
Special Education Advisory Committee	Myrna Laurenceson
Special Education Advisory Committee	Nancy Myers
Professional Student Services Personnel, President	Tom Bickford
Educational Assistants, District President	Cynthia Dubue
Manager of Field Services	Robert Flewelling
Principal of Special Education	Cindy Alce
Quality Assurance Coordinator	Joan Oracheski
Learning Support Consultant	Louise de March

